

# VIDEO AGE

international

**In This Issue:**  
**Antalya's S&S**  
**TV Slots As Gold**  
**AFM's Big Numbers**  
**MIPCOM's Biz Buzz**

[www.videoage.org](http://www.videoage.org)

## Breakfast With Starz's Bill Myers: TV To Change Only After 2013

BY DOM SERAFINI

**T**o understand the complex world of Starz Entertainment, one needs to start with a good breakfast, preferably with its president. Starz is a large and multifaceted entertainment group that is part of a larger conglomerate headed by Liberty Media: e.g., John Malone who, last February, swapped his 16 percent stake in Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. for Murdoch's 41 percent of DirecTV, the world's largest satellite platform, plus \$625 million in cash.

William (Bill) D. Myers is the 50-year old president of Starz Entertainment, which is based in Englewood, a suburb of Denver, Colorado. Myers' title, which in 2006 added the COO responsibility to his previous CFO moniker, reflects his 20 years of experience in the financial world, where he worked before joining Starz in 2002 from another Liberty subsidiary. Myers has



Bill Myers

(Continued on Page 24)

## NATPE, Berlin, Africa Marts Claim Triple Play

BY LEAH HOCHBAUM ROSNER

**W**e at *Video Age* understand that those with spouses must travel sometimes, but the upcoming 2009 market season's opening salvo is too much, even for vagabonds. Just imagine — a distribution company that sells movies internationally will need to be at three markets on three separate continents, all in the space of 30 days.

First comes NATPE, which will be held January 26-29 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Shortly thereafter is the Berlin International Film Festival, February 5-15 in Germany, followed by the first ever DISCOP Africa, which will take place February 25-27 in Dakar, Senegal. With markets so close together, it'll be tough for distribution executives to breathe, let alone get home for even a short stretch.

Yet, as incredible as it might sound, many companies will be attending all three markets — but not with the same people. The combinations will vary, but only a few who go to NATPE will travel to Germany, while many more will make

(Continued on Page 20)

## Singapore Stresses Market's Strength, ATF's Weakness

BY ERIN SOMERS

**T**he entertainment industry in Asia is experiencing a rise in international co-productions, the development and spread of new technology and, perhaps most

importantly, an increase in global interest in programming from the region. Christopher Chia, CEO of Singapore's Media Development Authority (MDA), pointed to these factors and more as reasons why Asia's TV biz is booming, and he expects it to expand even further in the next few years.

Indeed, as indicated by several research companies,

despite the stagnant DVD market in Hong Kong and Korea, the Asia-Pacific region is poised to become an area with the highest annual growth rate for filmed entertainment.

(Continued on Page 22)

## Middle East As Venue Gets Praise, Criticism

**F**or the past 65 years, film festivals and television markets have been held in such glamorous corners of the world as Venice, Italy; Cannes, France; Antalya, Turkey and Los Angeles, California, as well as other market spots such as Las Vegas, Nevada; Singapore and Monte Carlo. These days, however, it seems like film and TV event organizers are looking to conquer new ground with

(Continued on Page 18)

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# CONTENTS

VIDEO AGE • No. 6 • Nov / Dec 2008

## Cover stories:

**Breakfast with the Starz.** Prez Bill Myers talks about TV that changes and TV that stays the same

**NATPE, Africa, Berlin:** Gallivanting on three continents in 30 days in search of business

**Singapore to highlight TV market's strength and the ATF's weakness**

**Middle East as market venue gets praise and criticism. The good and the bad is vented out**

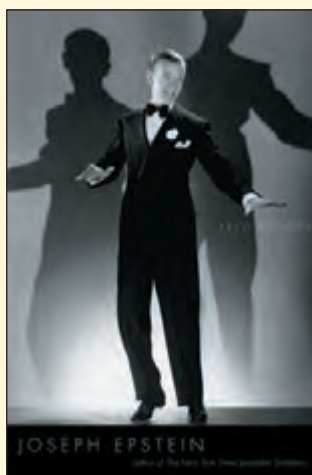


2.

**World:** DTTV switch-over, U.S. travel hassle, Miami's FMM, Latin America, wireless mics

6.

**Book Review.** Fred Astaire's era and his movies. Seventy-five years of pairing with a woman he disliked: Ginger Rogers



8.

**MIPCOM review.** Latins got market dancing to their tune. U.S. studios finally showcased pilots. Financial crisis stimulated buying

12.

**The AFM Diary.** More of the usual problems dealt some hope and even excitement



16.

**Antalya Film Fest** reached the moon and the stars in Turkey, like the nation's flag. Sales and co-productions also get some credit



26.

**Conferences and events news.** It's only a fancy name for the calendar of events

28.

**My 2¢:** Someone who has never been a program distributor telling you what to do in content distribution





## The U.S. Gets Ready for DTTV

**A**t midnight on February 17, 2009, all full-power U.S. terrestrial TV stations (those that cover large areas) will stop analog transmission and broadcast only in digital.

At that time all households that are currently receiving a TV signal through an antenna — 14 percent of all TV

households (15.5 million households) — will have three choices: getting a digital converter, buying a digital TV set or subscribing to a digital TV service (such as cable, satellite or IPTV).

The U.S. telecommunications authority, the FCC, does not require cable TV systems to convert to digital. Cable TV operators can therefore repeat channels in the analog system, but are then obligated to offer all local TV stations in analog. If the cable TV service becomes fully digital (to make room for new channels), reception with an analog TV set will require a converter. Satellite TV, which is always digital, uses an analog converter, while an IPTV converter makes use of the TV set's video and audio jacks.

For consumers, the least expensive choice is, of course, the purchase of a converter. To help families with the

digital switch, the U.S. government has developed an elaborate support program.

Through the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA), the U.S. government is running a "TV converter box coupon program." To inform the public, NTIA has a website — [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) (available in 12 languages) — and public service announcements on television. Participating stores that actually sell the digital converters are also involved in educating consumers. The focus of the program is the distribution of \$40 vouchers for the purchase of a converter box (which costs between \$40 and \$70). Each family can request up to two vouchers. The request can be made directly through the NTIA website, by toll free telephone numbers or by mail. The coupon is mailed out 15 days after



NTIA receives the request and is valid for 90 days. If the voucher is lost or damaged, it cannot be replaced.

All participating stores offer technical support and are required to sell only NTIA-approved converters (of which there are currently 70 models).

The program will cost the U.S. Federal Government \$1.5 million (covered by the revenues from the auction of the analog frequencies, which generated \$19 billion).

It is estimated that, at the end of the program, NTIA will have financed a total of 50 million converters. The program will end on March 31, 2009.

## Latin America Gets Scolded

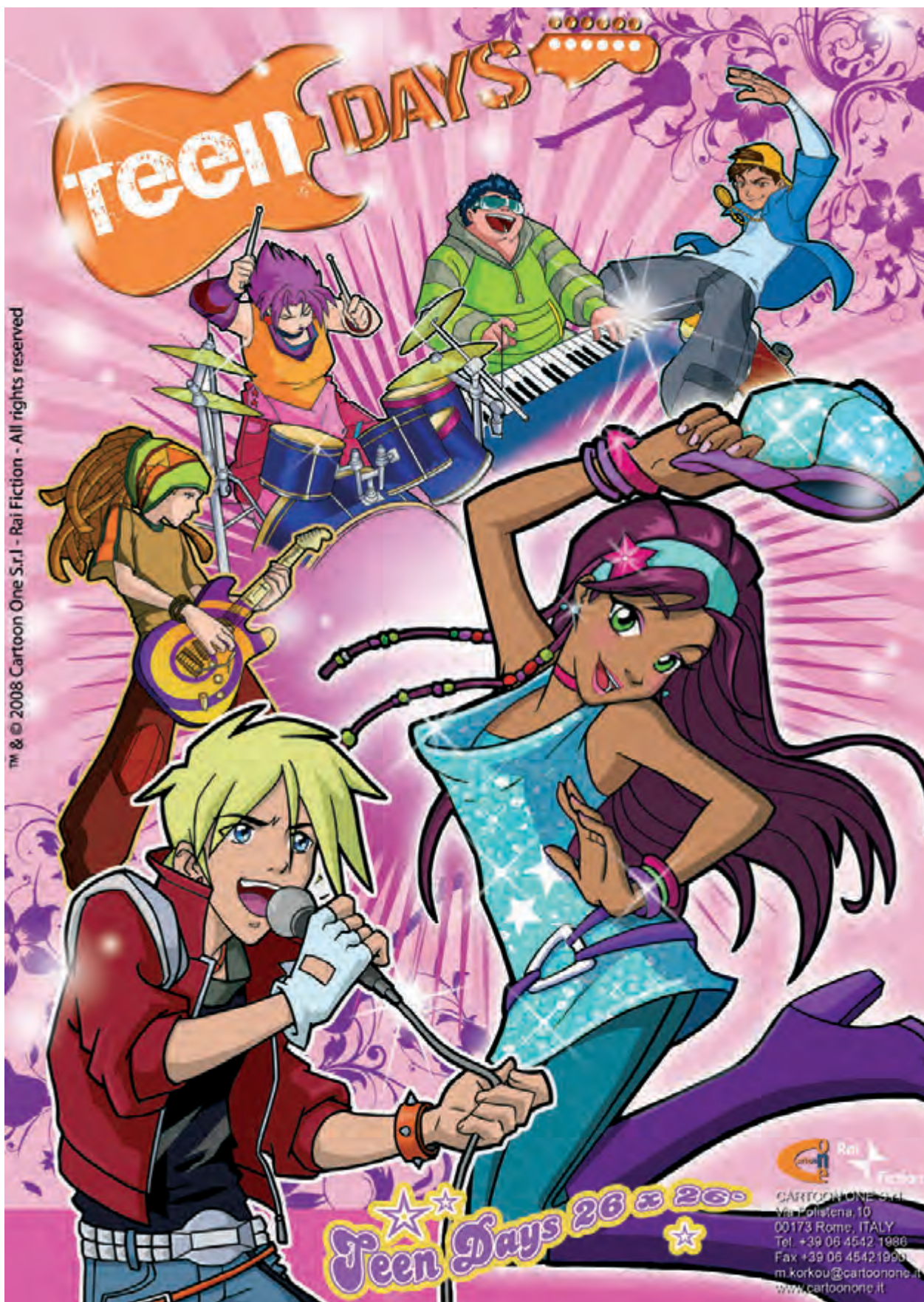
**R**ampant government interference with press freedom threatens editorial independence and access to unbiased news in seven Latin American countries, according to a new report, "The Price of Silence: The Growing Threat of Soft Censorship in Latin America." The study is published by the New York-based Open Society Justice Institute, a branch of the Open Society Institute that, in turn, is part of Hungarian-born U.S. billionaire George Soros' Foundation Network. The study catalogues abuses in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Peru, and Uruguay, including the widespread use of public funds to reward or punish news coverage.

"The Price of Silence" documents various types of interference, including evidence of direct government payments to journalists in Colombia and Peru; local authorities in Chile dictating what journalists can write about, and a high-ranking official in Costa Rica attempting to use advertising contracts to influence the outcome of a protracted political battle. In addition to denouncing abuses, the study makes 11 specific recommendations to all Latin American governments.

The report is available in its entirety online at:

[http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res\\_id=104124](http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res_id=104124)

(Continued on Page 4)







# Good stories have no frontiers

## Fiction Formats



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**TELENOVELA** - Format adapted in Chile, Mexico, Portugal, Colombia & Russia  
New versions in Italy, Greece & Turkey



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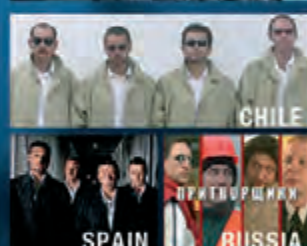
### COMEDY

Format adapted in Colombia, Romania, Turkey, Mexico, Chile & Russia



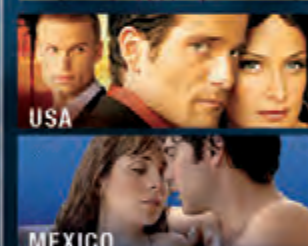
### SERIES

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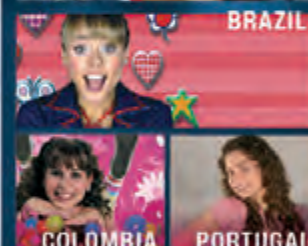
### SERIES

Format adapted in Spain, Chile & Russia  
New versions in development in France, Korea & Mexico



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(Continued from Page 2)

## Miami's FMM In Slow-Mo

The third annual Florida Media Market (FMM) risked being the year's first victim of the worldwide financial crisis. But in the end, it was held at the traditional Alexander Resort in Miami Beach, Florida, last October 23-26, and attracted the usual good number of top international film and TV players. Among the participating executives were Philip Alberstat, CEO



of 49 North Media, Millennium's Lonnie Ramati (both from Los Angeles) and Canada's Michel Zgarka, who premiered his latest movie, *Misbehaviour*.

Other executives came from Colombia, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Argentina. A large contingent came from the Miami area, including Venevision's Pedro Tinoco, Telemundo's Esperanza Garay and Carsey-Werner's Rolando Figueroa.

FMM's organizer Maritza Guimet acknowledged the difficult feat and reported half the attendance of last year — 200 participants — but determined to make the event a major player in the Latin American film and TV scene.

Pictured: *VideoAge's* Dom Serafini, Millennium's Lonnie Ramati, 49 North Media's Philip Alberstat at the seminar "The Business of Show Business," which Alberstat renamed "Rip-off 101." The seminar explored distribution and advances against sales in the current film and TV business environment.

## Microphones Lose Spectrum

The U.S. telecommunications authority, the FCC, recently decided to sell UHF frequencies to the highest

bidder in advance of the February 2009 shift of broadcast television from analog to digital transmission. TV stations won't be the only ones impacted, though. U.S. wireless products that have been operating in that spectrum will also be affected.

Wireless microphone manufacturers in the U.S. have been using the VHF and UHF frequencies for years now and this decision is causing a major uproar in the industry. Most wireless microphone products will now be challenged to find an unused, licensed frequency. Owners of such microphones are trying to decide whether their existing equipment will still operate, albeit with more noise, or must be replaced.

## Added Checks to U.S. Travel

Beginning in 2009, travel to the U.S. from abroad for pleasure or to attend a market, such as NATPE or the L.A. Screenings, will become even more time-consuming. As of January 12, all Visa Waiver Program (VWP) travelers will be required to obtain, via Internet, a travel authorization prior to boarding a carrier to the U.S.

The VWP allows citizens from 27 countries to travel to the States for 90 days or less for purposes of business or tourism without obtaining a visa. Under the new system, VWP travelers who do not apply for and receive authorization may be denied boarding and entry into the U.S.

The new restrictions apply to citizens and nationals from all VWP countries: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The authorization system — called the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) — has been operational since last August and requires that travelers apply online no later than 72 hours in advance of traveling. The application, which for now, is given only in English, asks biographical and eligibility questions similar to those found in the I-94W paper form (the form given to international travelers on planes before landing). If approved, the authorization is good for up to two years and multiple trips. The Department of Homeland Security, which administers the VWP, lists <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> as the site to obtain both information and forms, but it often doesn't connect, therefore it is better to use:

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travellid/visa/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travellid/visa/).

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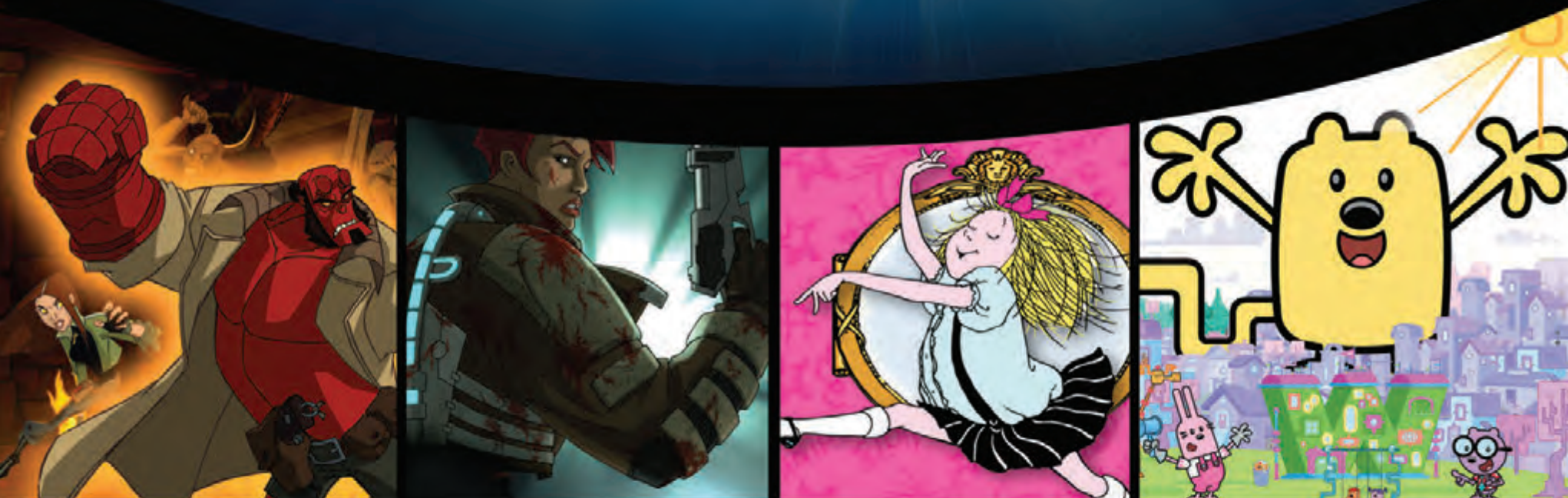
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## Fred Astaire: A Dance Musical Talent For All Financial Crises

**T**here has never been a more apt time for analysis of the rise of the musical comedy in American film than in the midst of an economic crisis. Perhaps today we can all learn something about entertaining a financially stricken audience from a look at the genre that rose to popularity, and eventually dominance, during the Great Depression.

A new book about one of Hollywood's finest song-and-dance men, **Fred Astaire** by Joseph Epstein (2008, Yale University Press, 198 pages, U.S.\$22), highlights the key component to Astaire's success, and the success of the musical genre as a whole: It provided audiences with a much-needed dose of escapism.

The biography first came to *VideoAge's* attention because of an incomprehensible review in the *New York Times'* weekly *Book Review* insert. The review focused, puzzlingly, on Astaire's relationship with his sister, a factor that was little more than a footnote in a book that sought to explain the performer's significance in Hollywood and American culture. The *Times* emphasized the fact that Astaire's sister and original partner, Adele, was the superior dancer and of the two "loved life [more] and let it come as it may." In centering on this triviality, the reviewer overlooked the most valuable part of the book, its examination of Astaire's role in building a reputation for the musical.

When one talks about Fred Astaire the first thing that comes to mind is dancing partner Ginger Rogers. The second thing is: Were they involved romantically?

Though Epstein touches on both topics briefly, the description of Fred and Ginger's relationship is lacking in depth and explanation. Astaire's private life, including a marriage to a non-actress that was largely kept under wraps and even the chapter that involved Ginger, is one of the book's most disappointing omissions. But let's proceed in order.

Astaire's appeal to the down-at-the-

heels audience of the 1930s was his effortless elegance. However, Epstein points out that his early life was a far cry from the upper-crust lifestyle he came to represent. Born Frederick Austerlitz in 1899, Astaire's lower-middle class childhood was devoid of any of the glamour of his later films. At a young age, Astaire and his sister, the aforementioned Adele, were spirited away from their Omaha, Nebraska home to New York City by their ambitious mother Ann to pursue careers in dance



on the vaudeville circuit.

Ann Austerlitz dubbed the young duo "Astaire" at the suggestion of a dance teacher, in order to evoke "a star" or, according to Epstein, "a stairway, perhaps one leading to Paradise." With their brand new name in tow, the Astaires set out to conquer the theater world, a task that involved hours of rehearsal, seedy venues and little time for the kids to be kids. Though Epstein hints at the idea that Ann Austerlitz and the other adults involved were exploiting the vastly talented children, he never explicitly points out that the Astaire siblings were their mother's sole source

of income. Such exclusions occur consistently throughout the book, which seems determined to paint a rosy picture of Fred Astaire's life at the cost of candor.

Of Astaire's talent as a hoofer (as dancers were called in those days), Epstein is adamant to communicate that Astaire was not a natural. Rather, beginning with his earliest performances as a child tapper, he was a perfectionist of "unrelenting ambition" and trained with a determination that far exceeded his sister's.

Like his dance routines, Astaire's rise to stardom looked easily graceful, but actually required a great deal of work. By his early 30s, he was a Broadway sensation ready to make the transition to film. Adele, who was a few years older, had just about reached the age limit of female dancers and retired to marry a British aristocrat. Fred was free to fly, or rather dance, solo, but his freedom was not destined to last.

Astaire might have been the man that put the musical comedy movie on the map, but he couldn't have done it alone. When he signed on with RKO in 1933, he was paired, more or less by chance, with bombshell Ginger Rogers in *Flying Down to Rio*. Despite the fact that they rarely kiss on camera and despised each other in real life, something about the Fred and Ginger partnership hit a note with the American people. Fred and Ginger went on to make 10 more movies together over the course of the '30s and early '40s, including *Top Hat*, *The Gay Divorcee*, *Roberta* and *Swingtime*, which are considered classics of the genre. More importantly, they brought light-hearted (and cheap) entertainment to people struggling to keep food on the table. Fred and Ginger idealized romanticism in America and set the bar for many future films.

As Epstein puts it "America loved Fred and Ginger together" and they were paired up in picture after picture because they never failed to sell movie tickets. However, one of Astaire's contributions to American film topped even his duets with Ginger: His complete reinvention

of the way musicals were shot and edited.

When he transitioned to the silver screen from the theater in the early '30s, musicals generally adhered to the aesthetic favored by director Busby Berkeley. This meant a lot of geometric-looking arrangements of "dancers [coming] out of fountains, down from clouds, peeping out of immense pools, with feathers, fans, boots, headdresses flapping and flying all over the joint." The effect was frivolous and moreover completely ignored film's most valuable tool: the close-up.

When Astaire began appearing in films, he insisted on being shot simply, in a medium shot that let the audience see his entire body at once, thus fully showcasing his talent. Additionally, he pioneered the close-up of facial expressions during songs, which allowed for a lot more emotion than Berkeley's theatrical showgirl numbers and set a new standard for how Hollywood musicals looked.

Although Astaire was a brilliant dancer

*When Astaire began appearing in films, he insisted on being shot simply, in a medium shot that let the audience see his entire body at once, thus fully showcasing his talent.*

and excellent all-around performer, his reputation has been sullied by reports of his reticence and reluctance to be interviewed and to attend social events. Again, Epstein glosses over this imperfection in the icon's life story. The author's reluctance to address any problem, hardship or character flaw of his subject is the book's biggest downfall. For although Astaire might have been perfection on stage and screen, surely he was still human. **ES** ●



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## Latins, Economy, Fantasy Shows: Mart's Biz Buzz

**T**he international financial crisis was not “exhibiting” at MIPCOM, but the summer-like weather couldn’t dispel the dark cloud of a recession compounded by the Wall St. meltdown. Overall, the “real economy” was showing off really well in Cannes, with restaurants and shops buzzing with customers and five-star hotels fully booked as usual.

More than the economy, on some people’s minds was the imminent closing of the Carlton Hotel for renovations. It will reopen in May 2009, but many top-level executives are left scrambling for



Action Concept’s Herman Joha, RTL’s Tom Sanger, FME’s David Ellender with the cast of 112

some 300 luxury rooms and suites for next year’s late March MIP-TV. It is expected that Cannes’ other five-star hotels will chip in some rooms for the displaced, vacated by those who will opt for apartment accommodations. The organizers are also touting the exclusive Four Seasons Resort, which, however, is in Tourrettes, some 46 km. (a 40-minute ride) west of Cannes.

The party circuit was also busy as usual, if not more so than last year. The many big bashes included shindigs thrown by Dori Media, RAI Trade, Disney, Flor Latina, Televisa (who called in a Mariachi band), Ukrainian media players and the grand Telemundo celebration, among others.

For Americans, the dollar’s newfound strength helped to get 18 percent more buck for their money, compared to MIP-TV in April. At times, it seems the U.S. exporting economic turmoil can be good for the entertainment business.

For example, the possibility of a



Dori Media’s Jose Escalante and Nadav Palti

Screen Actors Guild (SAG) strike — which could have meant another rocky winter for the U.S. entertainment industry (after the debilitating writers’ strike) — was averted in light of the economic crisis in the U.S. and worldwide.

And so, at MIPCOM, business proceeded at full speed, aided by several factors, one of which was the screening of pilots not ready during the L.A. Screenings, and the expected cuts by television outlets of their local production budgets.

It was said that, ultimately, the financial crisis will help distributors, but not traditional local producers. Networks will be producing less and buying more to fill their schedules with quality programming. Commercial TV networks lowered their 2009 advertising revenue projections from the expected nine percent drop to up to 15 percent lower. Public broadcasters will not suffer as much since they rely mostly on compulsory license fees.

In Cannes, RHI Entertainment’s president and CEO Robert Halmi Jr. said that he was “anxious to see how everyone is reacting to the world economical crisis.” He noted that the entertainment industry has proven to be a “bullet-proof” sector in the past, because in times of recession people turn on the TV for a bit of escapism. Halmi was confident that RHI will not fare too badly despite the economy’s downward spiral, because, as he put it, “Fantasy tends to be a big theme when people are a little down about the world.”

Appropriately, at MIPCOM, RHI premiered its new event miniseries,

*Meteor*, an action-packed four-hour miniseries about a massive, worldwide meteor shower.

Halmi remarked that this is a unique MIPCOM for his team, as they have sold three back-door pilots, including one to NBC. According to Halmi, producing a four-hour miniseries in lieu of a traditional pilot is a much more effective system for RHI than the half-hour pilot process. “With four hours you can show people much more than with an hour or a half-hour,” he said, “Especially because you have a higher budget.”

RDF Rights’ COO Jane Millichip commented that, “There is a lag between commissioning and delivery and a lot of the shows that we are offering [here at MIPCOM] were commissioned before the current economic crisis really took hold, so maybe in the immediate future, programming becomes more expensive for distributors to acquire as producers find they have larger deficits to finance.”

According to Millichip, “If broadcasters do start feeling the pinch and cut back on commissioning, they will still have schedules to fill and if they are not filling them with original production then they will have to fill them with acquisitions.”

Herb Lazarus, president of Carsey-Werner Distribution, said: “There is no precedent I can think of, but generally when the economy is crappy, inexpensive entertainment (such as



DMNLA’s Diego Lerner and Fernando Barbosa

television) and entertainment that takes your mind off your problems (such as movies) should be okay.”

The consensus of the panelists at the “Entertainment, Media and Advertising” seminar was that advertising needs to adjust to changing media challenges. The discussion was led by Saul Berman of IBM Global Business Services and focused on where TV advertising is headed in the era of the Internet. In his introductory remarks, Berman pointed out that with network television garnering smaller audiences, TV advertisers are getting less bang for their buck. The question Berman posed to the panel was: What can be done to get through to audiences who are watching fewer and fewer commercials?

Robert Friedman of Radical Media, Joe Michaels of MSN, Douglas Scott of Ogilvy Entertainment and Benjamin Faes of Google’s YouTube arm responded to Berman’s question by recommending collaboration between the various sectors of the media. Additionally, the participants noted that advertisers “need to acknowledge the conversation the Internet is causing,” and not dismiss user-generated content as an altogether bad thing. In final analysis, Berman suggested that the solution for advertising in the future has yet to be found.

Remaining on the keynote circuit,

(Continued on page 10)

Telefe International’s Nancy Rolon, Diana Coifman, Michelle Wasserman and Guillermo Henrich





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# MIPCOM REVIEW

(Continued from page 8)



Above: Peace Arch's Jacques de Suze, Victor Rodriguez, Mary Herne and Kevin Byles

Above left: VideoAge's traditional breakfast meeting

Left: Televisa's Fernando Perez Gavilan, A3's Mercedes Gamero, Televisa's Manuel Gilardi, Claudia Sahab and Ricardo Ehrsam



Lionsgate's Craig Cegielski, Sandra Stern and Kevin Beggs

Chad Hurley, founder and CEO of Internet video juggernaut YouTube, opened MIPCOM's first-ever Broadband Video Summit, which went on for a full day, with panels and lectures geared towards TV on the Web.

As far as territories garnering attention there were several: Russia, Spain, Italy and the Latin American region as a whole.

Russian companies represented a large and ever-growing contingent at MIPCOM and, on that front, the ones *VideoAge* contacted were mum about the recent news that Rupert Murdoch will be pulling out of Russia after Russian investigators raided the offices of News Corp.'s News Outdoor Group (NOG) in Moscow. NOG is Russia's largest outdoor advertising company with more than 36,000 sites across 90 cities.

According to one European consultant with extensive dealings in Russia, the reason why people were reluctant to talk is because "Russia is not yet a completely democratic country."

With the combination of an increasing presence of Latin American buyers and the worldwide popularity of Latin TV shows at an all-time high, it's no wonder that Latin American companies were having a very busy MIPCOM.

Diego Lerner, president of Disney Media Networks Latin American (DMNLA) announced that DMNLA's distribution unit will now distribute all Disney and non-Disney branded

content to the Hispanic market in the U.S. Fernando Barbosa, svp Distribution for DMNLA, and his Miami-based team will lead the new business venture, reporting to both Lerner and Janice Marinelli, president of Disney-ABC Domestic Television.

During the same press conference, DMNLA and Discovery Networks Latin America announced a production agreement to create a local version of the reality show *The Amazing Race* for the entire region. In addition, DMNLA and Internet company Terra TV have expanded their partnership and announced a host of new programs for 2009. Terra will host Disney LA's new "Catch Up" format, which will make primetime series such as *Lost* and *Grey's Anatomy* available on the Web shortly after their TV premieres.

In other Latin America news,

executives from Buenos Aires-based company Flor Latina (previously known as the Latin Flower Company) were at MIPCOM for the first time with the new name, and said that the climate for Latins couldn't be better.

Raphael Correa Netto, director of International Sales for Brazil-based Globo TV International, also found that MIPCOM is, more than ever, a productive place for his company. "Taking part in MIPCOM [also] gives us a great opportunity to get closer to our clients in Africa and Asia," he said.

Cesar Diaz, vp of Sales for Miami-based Venevision International, remarked that, "it's very important to us that people recognize that we're not only about telenovelas." Venevision is emphasizing its documentary content in addition to its usual arsenal of telenovelas.

Spain was this MIPCOM's country of honor, and one could say that the country's TV sector is losing (with honor), the battle to win the hearts, minds and wallets of Latin America, Spain's close kin. Indeed, the lack of a major presence of Spanish TV companies at both NATPE and the L.A. Screenings, two of the major Latin American trade shows, indicates what would seem to be capitulation. The trend, now, is for Spanish companies to leave their imprint on the region through co-ventures with Latin America and U.S.-based companies.

On the domestic front, Spain is also facing a few drawbacks. For Ignacio Orive, president of Spain's Elastic Rights, major changes loom in the immediate future. "We are rapidly moving from a market dominated by a few FTA channels, to one in which 40 to 45 channels are fighting over an

advertising pie that will not have grown, and may have even shrunk," he asserted. Orive went on to explain that "pay-TV never really took off in Spain, so the owners of the pay channels have all started to move to DTT, which, especially in tough economic times, must be a bigger attraction than pay." Currently, however, Spanish laws don't allow for pay-DTT, and Orive questions whether 40 or 45 channels can survive on the same advertising pie, which hitherto had supported a maximum of 10.

Imagina's Geraldine Gonard is also concerned about the imminent fragmentation of Spain's broadcasting market, "Distributors will have to make more sales as each of the sales made will be for less money," she said. She also believes that "fragmentation is likely to lead to some early consolidation in the broadcast sector."

The theme of Wednesday's traditional *VideoAge* breakfast was Africa, and in particular, the launch — next February 25-27 — of DISCOP Africa in the seaside city of Dakar. Patrick Jucaud of DISCOP East organizer Basic Lead, and Rick Feldman, president of event partner NATPE, were on hand to talk about their plans for the new market. Special guests from Nigerian company Daar Group, as well as representatives from eight other countries were in agreement that, for a variety of reasons, DISCOP Africa could take the place of the now-defunct Monte Carlo market.

In his remarks, Jucaud stressed the importance of advertisers to the future development of broadcasting in Africa. As he put it, "they are crucial to the process."

Feldman, for his part, offered his outfit's complete support for DISCOP Africa and went on to highlight a few additions to NATPE '09. Participants can look forward to an expanded convention floor with a restaurant, a theater for high-tech demonstrations and double the floor space.

Going back to MIPCOM, a surprise for some was the elimination of buyers' pigeonholes, making it more difficult to reach them. Next to go are the press pigeonholes, while this year the organizers did away with all printed press information, since, it was said, it's all available online. While it's true that journalists don't have the time to retype press releases and therefore it's better to receive them online, the Internet is not too practical and rather time-consuming when in need of quick reference material or just to check people's names and affiliations.

Because the flow of people is now shifting from the Palais' basement to the Riviera side of the convention center and, lately to the seaside next to the Riviera, the traffic in the "bunker" seemed light. This, however, did not indicate a reduced number of participants, which was tallied at 13,588, or a 1.6 percent increase over last October's event. ●



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## More Of The Usual Problems, But with Hope and Excitement

**F**or the AFM, the annual Santa Monica, California film market that this year began the day after an historic event in America — the election of the first African-American U.S. president — Barack Obama was low on the list of interests of market exhibitors and buyers. At the opening day press conference, the newly elected Obama came into the picture only towards the end, when Jean Prewitt, CEO of IFTA, which organizes the AFM, briefly acknowledged the “historical day” and noted that IFTA favored Obama for his “position on net neutrality and broad diversity in the media.” Net neutrality concerns Internet sales, even though, as Prewitt explained, “We don’t yet know how to make money with digital rights.”

Indeed, as also reported by U.S. studio executives, even though downloading will continue to grow, it still represents only a tiny piece of their business.

Lloyd Kaufman, IFTA chairman, pointed out that the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the association that represents the U.S. studios, “is against net neutrality.” While recognizing that the IFTA has “not been successful with the net neutrality issue,” Kaufman said that this is an issue that should concern not just the U.S., but also the world.

About Obama’s election, Prewitt concluded: “Today we’re very hopeful for our members and for the economy. And the film industry creates jobs.” Perhaps it was purely coincidence, but it could be Obama’s victory that resulted in the elimination of the security checks at the entrance of the Loews Hotel — the AFM’s market center — an annoying (and useless) feature that had been in place for the past seven years.

The MPAA came into the picture a few more times, like when Kaufman, who is also the president of production and distribution company Troma Entertainment, mentioned that IFTA “wants to be part of the regulatory process with opinion makers and politicians. They don’t have to get their info from the MPAA. Now they can get information from us at the IFTA.”



Pictured above (L. to r.): EuroVideo’s Grant Raynham, Claus Czaika, RHI’s John Alexander, EuroVideo’s Michael Mullner and MPA’s Mario Pimentel  
Pictured below: Image Entertainment and Brainstorm Media’s annual AFM dinner at the Marix Tex Mex Restaurant in Santa Monica



Prewitt added that the MPAA business model is completely different from that of IFTA members and that legislators now recognize that there are two different views. Jonathan Wolf, IFTA’s evp and general manager of AFM, explained that, in general, the U.S. business model is to get up to 70 percent financing from international sales, while in many other countries, investments are recouped domestically.

Preempting the usual questions about empty corridors at the Loews Hotel, where suites were turned into sales offices, Wolf said: “I’m worried when I see crowded halls because it indicates that [buyers] are not at the screening places.”

Wolf also explained that one of AFM’s greatest features is the high number of world premieres (102 films) since “buyers are always looking for new product.”

In the opinion of several exhibitors, however, the AFM is primarily a DVD market, and a few buyers, such as Mario Pimentel of Portugal’s MPA, actually skipped MIPCOM this year for that reason. Masafumi Odawara of Japan’s Asterisk Corp. commented that because of the high cost of dubbing, Japanese companies are only interested in studio films, which are not found at the AFM. On the other hand, because of much exploitation prior to a film’s TV



Lloyd Kaufman, Jean Prewitt and Jonathan Wolf at the AFM opening day press briefing



ACI’s George Shamieh and Chevonne O’Shaughnessy

broadcast, “big titles” or A-movies do poorly on free over-the-air television. This problem is less often associated with the B-movies that are so popular at the AFM.

Other AFM characteristics are its pre-sale agreements that filmmakers take to the banks as guarantees to secure production money. In addition, the bad state of the world economy is proving a boon for DVD rentals. Blockbuster has already recorded an increase in rentals and it has projected further gains in the coming months. It was this DVD sales news that brought a number of companies to the AFM for the first time. Said Andrew Schreiber of U.K.’s Power: “We’re here for the first time to expand our presence in the DVD market.”

Another first-timer was Jill Keenleyside of Canada’s CCI, who reported brisk sales for *Alice Upside Down*, with an all-rights deal concluded in the U.K., and with negotiations conducted with Germany, Latin America and the Middle East.

Italy’s RAI Trade, back at the AFM after a year’s sabbatical, announced several sales for two movies, *Giovanna’s Father* and *Bad Girls*, into such territories as Japan, Spain, Germany, Mexico and Scandinavia.

Nonetheless, the close proximity of the powerful Cannes-based MIPCOM with the Santa Monica event continues to have a negative effect on sales at the AFM.

But more than the poor economy, president-elect Obama and AFM machinations, on the mind of many sellers was the problem of too many movies chasing too few dollars. The glut of completed movies seemed to be the real economy at the AFM even though some disagreed. “Each territory has its own preference,” commented one distributor.

(Continued on Page 14)



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## The AFM Diary

(Continued from page 12)

"There are countries that prefer action and horror and others that favor romantic comedies. The quality might vary, however." In any case, help is on the way.

At one of the many AFM conferences, it was pointed out that the credit crisis will result in fewer movies being produced — at least for the next five years. The implication here was that companies had better stock up now.

Also facing the indies are issues such as companies' stock prices going down, the credit crunch, the critical financial



MIFF Awards' Andrea Galante

status of countries like Iceland, the threat of a Screen Actors Guild strike,

budget cuts, and the end-of-year budget cycle. The latter is a recurrent end-of-the-year syndrome, when acquisition executives run out of money and go to the AFM to shop instead of buy. An acquisition boost is expected at the beginning of 2009, but then it would be NATPE (late January in Las Vegas), the Berlin Film Festival (in Germany in mid-February) and MIP-TV (in Cannes, late March) that would benefit.

According to ACI's George Shamieh, buyers dried up their budgets three months prior to the AFM. However, Chevonne O'Shaughnessy added that at the AFM, ACI completed sales of its miniseries *Jack Hunter* to TV Azteca, CineCanal, Channel 12 Uruguay and RCTV. And for the company's success in Latin America, she credited *VideoAge*.

Similarly, it was said that the better dollar exchange rate is improving non-



Hollywood producer Seth Willenson, CCI's Jill Keenleyside

U.S. distributors' sales and making locations outside the U.S. more appealing to American producers. At the same time however, the dollar gain "burned" up what was left in non-U.S. buyers' budgets.

As for the buying contingent, according to market organizers, a good number were recorded from Asia, especially Japan. A total of 1,527 buyers were in attendance, 100 fewer than last year.

At the obsessive urging of *The Business of Film's* editor, Elspeth Tavares, who was insistent that the AFM needed to go paperless in order to become green, AFM's Wolf explained that, in a survey, buyers clearly prefer paper-based information because they don't always have the time needed to log onto the Internet while at a market. Prewitt said that her biggest mistake last year was to insist on providing only online information, which ushered in a flood of requests from AFM members asking her assistant to print the information. Also, she added, "We certainly cannot lobby politicians and tell them to log onto our Web site to get the needed data."

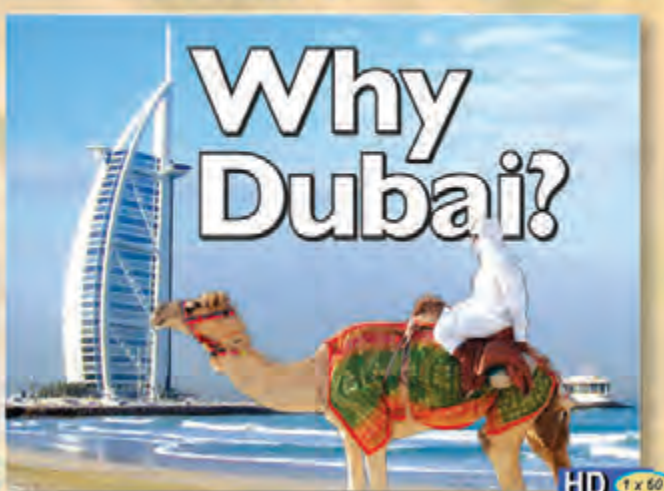
On the figures side, a total of 409 companies from 36 countries exhibited at the AFM, a two percent reduction from last year. But total registrants numbered 7,903 — a 5.3 percent decrease from 2007. At the eight-day event, 375 market premieres (films introduced for the first time at the AFM) were screened and 37 films presented at the market were selected for the AFI Fest, which runs as a parallel event in Hollywood. The market also featured 15 seminars and conferences (for which the AFM charged fees), which were held at the Merigot and Fairmont hotels. The former is also the venue that housed companies that could not be accommodated at the adjacent Loews.

Several groups took advantage of the AFM to make announcements. From Italy, Andrea Galante introduced a new feature to his Milan International Film Fest, at a launch party held in Santa Monica. ●

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# Turkish Film Bazaar Mixes Star Power & Sales

Last October 10, movie stars of the caliber of Kevin Spacey, Mickey Rourke, Danny Glover, Michael York, Marisa Tomei and Matthew Modine left Hollywood and headed for Turkey, to the sea resort town of Antalya for the 45th annual Golden Orange Film Festival — Turkey's longest-running cinema summit — which showcased 16 current Turkish films. The festival featured the fourth edition of the Golden Orange's global gateway, the International Eurasia Film Festival, which is just a “flashy-named”

days of business meetings and networking events. Buyers were present from such firms as Bavaria Film International, HBO Central Europe, Joint Entertainment, Kinowelt International, Maximum Films, Studio Canal, Kimmel International, Metrodome Distribution and Lighthouse Pictures, among others.

The Eurasia Film Market offered up market screenings, meetings with high-profile professionals, as well as a video library. The event attracted 300 industry executives from 55 countries.



Marisa Tomei was one of the stars in attendance

sideshow of the main event, and which constitutes the international competition, with 12 titles.

During the 10-day Festival, the international stars mingled with Turkish stars on the shores of the Mediterranean, where continents and cultures collided for red carpet galas nearly every night. The event ended with a ceremony that revealed the 11 winners of the Golden Orange trophies.

There were also two sidebar events held during and after the festival. The third edition of the Eurasia Film Market, which started October 10, was considered satisfactory by participating companies. Hosted at the Hillside Su Hotel, the market welcomed buyers and sellers from around the globe for three

And at the very successful second annual Eurasia Production Platform (EPP), which began on October 22, producers from New Zealand, Taiwan, Mainland China as well as France, Germany and Turkey, were on hand to encourage co-productions, as well as to provide participants with an opportunity to meet with representatives of high-quality projects looking for international audiences. As noted by EPP director Deniz Ziya Temeltas, “it seems that Antalya was the perfect venue to bring projects so dear to Turks.” Reportedly, four major co-production deals were signed on the spot.

To further underline Antalya's importance, Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ertugrul Gunay, is said to

was matched with local features that had been responsible for the recent surge in popularity of Turkish films. Best film winner *The Market-A Tale of Trade* from British director Ben Hopkins, was shot in Turkey with a Turkish cast. *Market's* Tayanç Ayaydin won the award for best actor, while Nurgul Yesilcay won the best actress prize for *Conscience*. In addition, Turkish filmmaker, Ferzan Ozpetek, who resides in Italy, presented his Italian movie, *Un Giorno Perfetto*.

The best director award went to Turkey's Dervis Zaim for *Dot*, about a man who goes against the laws of God in order to help a friend. Other award winners included Ozcan Alper's *Autumn*, which took home the NETPAC



Pictured above is Kevin Spacey on the red carpet  
Below: Antalya's grand jury, presided over by Paul Verhoeven

be planning 35 weeks of Turkish Cinema worldwide — hopefully beginning in Los Angeles. However, Turkish executives at the AFM in Santa Monica could not confirm such plans.

It was not just star wattage, like the presence of Jacqueline Bisset, that made this year's event memorable, but the intimate master classes taught by Spacey, Glover, Tomei and Modine, all of whom stole the show. In the case of Maximillian Schell, best known in Turkey for his lead role in 1964's *Topkapi*, even old Hollywood stories came alive.

A vast selection of international fare

(Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) prize for best Asian film. Honorary awards went to Spacey, Paul Verhoeven (*Basic Instinct*), Schell, York and Zbigniew Preisner.

The top prize in the international section (Eurasia) went to Karim Dridi's *Khamsa*, while Japan's Hirokazu Koreeda won the best director award for *Still Walking*. Prizes were awarded by an international jury led by Verhoeven and included Chinese-born actress Joan Chen. ●

This story was compiled from various dispatches.



A promotional poster for the TV show 'En nombre del amor'. It features three actors: a blonde woman on the left in a light blue dress with her arms crossed, a woman in the center with dark hair in a white blouse and brown vest, and a man on the right in a white shirt and dark jacket. They are standing in front of a building with a balcony. The title 'EN NOMBRE DEL AMOR' is written in large, stylized letters, with 'AMOR' in red script. Below it is the tagline 'In the name of love' in a cursive font. The bottom of the poster has a blue wavy graphic and contact information for Televisa Internacional.

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## Middle East Venue

(Continued from Cover)

their entertainment-themed conferences by holding them in some of the globe's newest centers of commerce, such as Africa and the Middle East — more specifically, Senegal, Africa and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

But while Senegal — which, like the UAE, is a predominantly Muslim region — is garnering accolades for markets such as DISCOP Africa, other locales such as South Africa, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are being griped about by some members of the Dallas, Texas-based Meeting Professionals International (MPI), an organization for meetings and events professionals. The concern is over the perception of unfair treatment of women and Jews, and the local government stances on Israel. South Africa, on the other hand is being criticized for its support of Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, who is known to employ terror tactics.

Recently, MPI came under fire for its decision to move forward with programs in the Middle East, including the Gulf Meetings and Events Conference (GMEC), which will be held March 28-29, 2009 in Abu Dhabi in the UAE, and the Global Certificate in Meeting Operations (GCMO), which took place in Qatar in November.

Didier Scaillet, vice president of Global Development at MPI, said that he has not been able to reconcile attendees' actual, positive experiences in the region with the fearful comments of a minority that has never visited the area. Scaillet acknowledged that while there are certainly concerns about operating meetings in the Middle East, it all depends on where such an event is happening. "We're very cautious about where we go," he said. "The UAE is one thing. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are something else entirely." These are regions that MPI will avoid due to alleged overt prejudice against women and Jews. "There's a huge amount of misperception about the Middle East," said Scaillet. "It's an extremely diverse place with different religions and different levels of tolerance." Scaillet also insisted that Israel is always in the running as a possible MPI event venue.

While Scaillet was somewhat surprised by the level of outrage at MPI's decision to hold conventions in the Middle East, he said that it was a necessary move for a company expanding from a North American-centric firm to a global contender, and maintained that the Gulf region is poised for growth. Scaillet also contended that while a handful of individuals have expressed concern



Pictured above: Didier Scaillet of Texas-based Meeting Professionals International

Pictured top right: a night view of Dubai

about the Middle Eastern venues, it hasn't been enough to warrant an organized response from MPI. Plus, he added, "It's really a matter of respect. Same way if you go to the Vatican, you don't go in half naked, be respectful here. In certain periods of the year, namely Ramadan, don't eat in the streets. It's respect, no more no less."

Regardless of many misperceptions that may revolve around the region, it still seems ripe for occupation by Hollywood-types. "The Middle East, now almost synonymous with the Arab world, is a huge media market of over 250 million people with well over 200 television channels," said Josh Elbaum, managing director of Los Angeles-based Media Investment Group, a financial and strategic advisory firm that provides services to the global media and entertainment industries, and who has extensive knowledge of the Middle East region. Explained Elbaum: "It's also crucial to understand that this market is a young one — about two-thirds of the population is 25 years or younger. Geographically, it's vast. Culturally, it's diverse with significant differences in customs, speech and traditions." Elbaum went on to note that the entire region shares an appreciation for good storytelling, making it a great place for creators of film and television.

However, many would-be Middle East market attendees allege that if you're the wrong kind of person — namely a Jew, a woman or a homosexual — you may be denied entry into a number of Middle East countries or if allowed in, treated like a second-class citizen.

"I did not encounter any specific difficulties from either a logistics standpoint or the government," commented David Tomatis, an organizer of Monte Carlo-based SPORTEL, which held one of its sports programming markets in Dubai in 2004. "I didn't see any difference between that event and the events we organize in Monaco or Asia." Tomatis said he was unaware of any specific restrictions or the



*"The Middle East, now almost synonymous with the Arab world, is a huge media market of over 250 million people with well over 200 TV channels."*

— Josh Elbaum



Josh Elbaum of Los Angeles-based Media Investment Group

mistreatment of females, Jews or anyone with an Israeli stamp on his or her passport, contending, "there are rules and regulations in a number of countries around the world — not just the Middle East." However, he did acknowledge that there seemed to be more "security policies within the U.S. companies themselves, which I believe were linked to insurance issues."

While SPORTEL has yet to schedule another event in Dubai, Tomatis was optimistic that it could happen again. "We determine the venue of the market based on the results of a regular survey taken by our participants." Right now, said participants seem to prefer a regular rotation between North America and Asia. Regardless, said Tomatis: "Our Dubai event was a success, with strong participation from many countries, including the U.S. As a SPORTEL organizer, it would not be a problem to organize another event in Dubai or elsewhere in the Middle East. Today, our main obstacle in Dubai is financial. Hotel rates and cost for rental space is

very high because of strong demand, which proves that everyone is going to that part of the world."

Elbaum concurred with Tomatis that business is booming in the Middle East, but was somewhat less emphatic about the positive aspects of attending events there. "An Israeli stamp precludes entry into Lebanon," he said. "I've also heard it tends to invite questions from the authorities elsewhere. Similarly, Arab stamps will ensure questions from Israeli authorities."

For years, Elbaum has spent a large chunk of time in places such as Beirut, Amman and Marrakech, attending entertainment festivals such as MEIFF (Middle East International Film Festival), which was held in Abu Dhabi in late October. "I make four-to-six visits annually," he said. When asked if he, a man with an overtly Semitic-sounding name, has ever encountered the problems that face Jews and women in entering certain Gulf region countries, Elbaum said: "None that I've experienced," before going on to say that he completely understands the reason that market organizers have opted for Middle Eastern venues. **LHR** ●



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## Triple Play Marts

(Continued from Cover)

the trek to Africa.

Each market has its own niche, with NATPE being primarily a Latin American TV trade show. Berlin is a film market that came into existence due to a decision made by organizers of the Santa Monica, California-based American Film Market (AFM) to move the AFM to November. And the appeal of DISCOP Africa is the opportunity it presents to international distributors who are interested in opening up a new market in a region that is becoming increasingly cash-rich, while lacking a TV tradition. Those companies who get there first will not only reap future benefits, but will also help the region develop an industry in which they will most likely maintain some influence.

With that in mind, *VideoAge* sought out a who's who of market participants to find out: 1) whether entertainment companies are planning to attend all three of these one-after-another events, 2) which they've chosen to prioritize over others, and, 3) if an overabundance of markets and festivals in one time period seems to be the way of the future.

"It will be a busy time, but with so much [economic] uncertainty these days, every broadcaster knows he or she has to go to a number of markets," said Bruce Rabinowitz, a New York-based Sales executive for Italy's RAI Trade, who will be personally attending both NATPE and DISCOP Africa. While he himself won't make the trip to the Berlin Film Fest, Rabinowitz said that his Rome-based RAI Trade colleagues will attend as always. "[RAI Trade] likes to go to Berlin," he said.

While Rabinowitz revealed that he's not necessarily looking forward to logging so many frequent flyer miles in one fell swoop, he does acknowledge that he cannot afford to miss out on potential business opportunities in these unstable times. Regarding DISCOP Africa, which is being touted as the first event of its kind dedicated to the development of the television content business in Africa, he said: "I want to check it out. I can't imagine that any major broadcaster would let DISCOP Africa slide. Every [distributor and] broadcaster has to see the value in getting into the area."

As for NATPE, "it's a good opportunity for RAI Trade to reach Latin Americans," said Rabinowitz. "We have more focused meetings with Latin American buyers at NATPE. That doesn't happen for us at MIP-TV or MIPCOM. NATPE is calmer and more focused."

For Almira Malyshev of New York-based Screen Media Ventures, NATPE



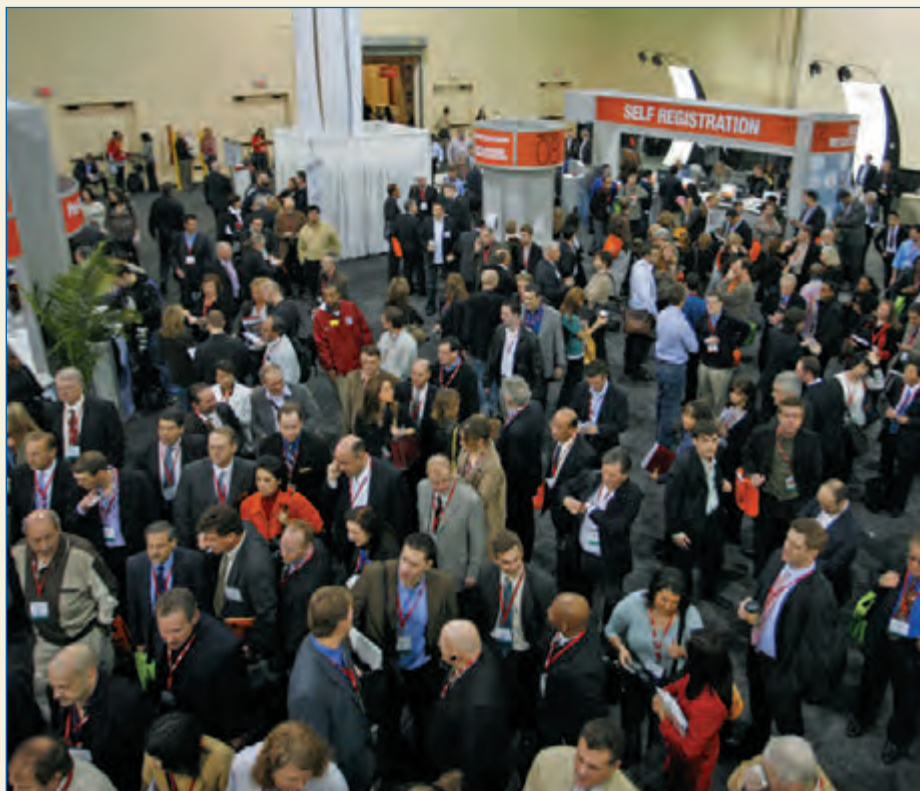
Telemundo's Luis Daniel Capriles

and the Berlin Film Festival are top priorities, while DISCOP Africa is still being batted around as a possibility. "As long as these markets are reasonably priced and there are buyers there, we'll be there," she said. "It's the only way for us to remain competitive." Though Malyshev recognized the necessity of seeking out new business in this rather

Alliance), the Los Angeles-based trade association of independent producers and distributors of films and TV, which organizes the annual AFM. Malyshev sits on the IFTA board.

The Berlin Film Fest has now become a must-attend event for Screen Media. Regardless, there are still a few things Malyshev would change about the German conference were she given the chance. While she's as yet unsure where she and her colleagues will set up shop, she said that they'd probably have a suite at the Ritz-Carlton as they did last year. "There's no room on the main floor and the business center didn't work for us," she said, hence the hotel venue. "The Ritz-Carlton isn't perfect, but it's the best of our options. We're hoping organizers of the Berlin Film Festival really start taking a good look at the needs of participants."

Although Malyshev, like RAI Trade's Rabinowitz, is dreading the winter's constant travel, she knows it's well worth it. "There are just so many markets now that it's hard to spread them out. Anyway, I like market environments because we have the potential to sell to so many people at once. I try to take it one market at a time."



The exhibition floor at NATPE 2008

wobbly economic climate, that doesn't mean she's all for the constant travel that the entertainment business seems to require these days. "Does it make my life easier as a salesperson? No. But if we find that markets are producing results, then we'll go," she said. "Do I expect a lot from NATPE? No. But it's a chance to meet with buyers, and a chance to exchange information with sellers."

Despite her misgivings about the Las Vegas event, Malyshev feels that this year's NATPE will be cost-effective for Screen Media given that instead of having its own booth, the company will be exhibiting under the umbrella of IFTA (Independent Film and Television

Luis Daniel Capriles, vp of International Digital Media for Florida-based Telemundo Internacional, will attend NATPE, and colleagues of his will make an appearance at DISCOP Africa, but the company, known for its telenovelas, won't be at the Berlin Film Fest. "At NATPE, we'll be meeting up with clients, as well as following up on our MIPCOM meetings in order to discuss strategies for developing video-on-demand platforms across Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean," said Capriles. Telemundo will focus on bringing new content such as soap *Analia* to the forefront, as well as furthering the penetration of already-existing content, such as *Marina*, that



Screen Media Ventures' Almira Malyshev

has proven to be a success. "The bulk of our meetings will be with Latin Americans," said Capriles, noting that the Las Vegas market has become a hub for Latins in recent years. But he did mention that he has already set up a handful of meetings with European companies.

Despite the fact that Capriles himself won't make the trip out to Africa, a team of Telemundo execs will be there to capitalize on the new event. "In Africa, our strategy is not focused on the digital side yet. It's more on the [traditional] content side," he said. "DISCOP Africa is very different from [a well-established] market like MIPCOM. We go all the way when we attend a MIP-TV or a MIPCOM, where we'll be meeting with clients from every locale, including Latin America, Europe, the U.S. and Africa."

When asked whether there are simply too many events occurring at nearly the same time this winter, Capriles said: "It's enough. Any more markets and it would be quite impossible."

Farrell Meisel, a TV consultant who travels the world seeing to clients' needs, concurred, but noted that the downwardly spiraling economy should make most companies less likely to attend so many TV or film conferences. "It does appear that the industry is getting into a cycle of too many markets," said Meisel, who will go to NATPE, but not DISCOP Africa or the Berlin Film Festival. "In a healthy economic environment, it would be too much. But given the recession, I would find it difficult for CEOs to allow their executives to attend even the salient markets. Not only is there a cost factor, but there is also time lost in the office, which is difficult to make up, especially when companies are downsizing."

On the other hand, pointed out a U.S. studio executive who wished to remain anonymous, "I would not be meeting many clients just sitting in my office."

And on that note, let's not forget that barely 29 days after DISCOP Africa, entertainment industry executives will be back on the road for an earlier-than-usual MIP-TV in Cannes. And no one can skip that one. ●



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## Asia TV Forum

(Continued from Cover)

A vast region comprised of up to 44 countries, Asia contains four main territories (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia), followed by four other growing countries (Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore). Australia and New Zealand are excluded from the area. China, though an economic giant, has a relatively small market — in terms of entertainment output — comparable to that of Malaysia. In addition, China has issues of censorship and a quota system. Thailand is mainly just a good production location.

A trade show that should reflect the growth and opportunities of the region is the Asia TV Forum (ATF), which is taking place December 10-12 at Singapore's Suntec Convention Centre. ATF dodged a bullet earlier this year when plans for a rival Asian market, AMAZIA, were put to rest. The nine-year-old convention boasts record-breaking numbers, buyers from over 32 countries, status as the only program market in the region, and a brand new venue. After eight years of taking place at hotels (most recently at Singapore's Shangri-La), ATF '08 will be held at a convention center.

Although ATF is the only "show in town" for some companies, it is not yet the "best show" in town. In addition to the difficulties of dealing with Asian program buyers, the market suffers from a dearth of top-level acquisition executives. Reportedly, the ATF has not yet been able to offer exhibition companies the kind of support mechanism that a difficult territory, such as Asia, would require. For this reason, companies that are keen on the territory, but are not participating in ATF are embarking on a more grueling, if more rewarding, market-by-market visit. It has been pointed out that DISCOP, the market for Central and Eastern Europe, faced the same problems, and that only time was able to resolve that market's main issues.

Racquel Mesina, director of International Sales for Toronto-based Cinemavault, said that, "We are taking a booth at the exhibition center," adding that the new venue will help her company. Mesina also pointed out that ATF is an important market for her team because it allows them to connect with clients who don't attend MIPCOM or MIP-TV. Many key Asian buyers forego the Cannes events, thus making an appearance in Singapore is vital to Mesina, who strives to stay in "ongoing



MDA's Christopher Chia

Pictured below: the Suntec Convention Centre



contact with our current clients, which keeps them aware of our latest product and helps us maintain a personal relationship despite our geographical distance." Mesina also suggested that Asia is gaining prominence as a region as DVD and theatrical sectors in the U.S. slow down and companies are forced to look elsewhere for profits.

Where content is concerned, Mesina predicted that action, adventure, and thriller titles will garner the most attention from buyers at this year's market, as they are the region's most popular genres at the moment. However, she also remarked that "some dramas and romantic comedies with strong and recognizable casts to the Asian market still appear to be of interest to broadcasters."

A different forecast was offered by Sharon Tann of ATF organizing company Reed Exhibitions. "From surveys conducted with buyers attending the market, genres including animation, documentary and family entertainment come up tops consistently," she said. Additionally, Tann noted that high-definition content is really taking off across the region.

MDA's Chia explained that following

*Singapore's forward-thinking approach to technology, its good infrastructure, tight copyright laws and reasonable accommodations create a prime convention atmosphere.*



Cinemavault's Racquel Mesina

seeing an increase in buyers from the new media and telecommunications sectors. A two-hour ATF forum on the topic reinforces the idea that mobile TV will be a trend to watch.

Besides HD and mobile technology, Chia thought that some of the convention's most popular products would be "pan-Asian productions that tap into Asia's rich culture and feature Asian subjects." He also projected a rising number of co-productions between companies from Asia with those from other regions. Recently, MDA has had success selling a slew of programming to buyers outside of Asia, including animated Chinese series *Tao Su – The Warrior Boy* and *Little Big Dreams*, a documentary about a Chinese Olympic athlete.

Predictions aside, the consensus among companies was that the one thing that can be counted on is that Singapore is a prime location for an Asian market. Chia referred to the city as "an East-West gateway," emphasizing that in the future it could play an important role in bringing together companies from all corners of the world. Singapore's forward-thinking approach to technology, its good infrastructure, tight copyright laws and reasonable accommodations create a prime convention atmosphere.

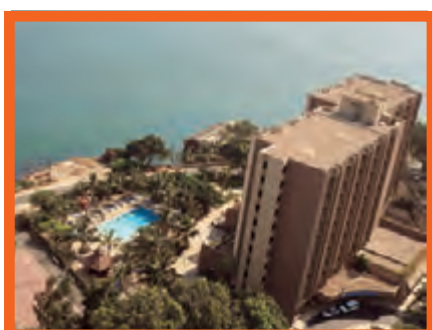
Also, as Tann explained, many of Asia's top cable and satellite broadcast networks are based in Singapore, including Discovery, CNBC Asia, MTV Asia, ESPN and a host of others. Plus, companies in the Southeast Asia region are known not to travel much to international markets, so it provides exclusive access to many firms.

In addition to the usual wheeling and dealing, ATF participants can look forward to keynotes from Shine Group and Electronic Arts. A full day seminar in conjunction with the U.S. Motion Picture Association will address Asia's growing piracy problem and an awards ceremony will bring the three-day event to a close. ●



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### **TELEVISION AND BUYERS INFORMATION**

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## Breakfast With Starz's Bil Myers

(Continued from Cover)

been working with various Liberty entities since 1989. Previously, he worked at accounting firm KPMG's Denver office.

VideoAge journalists met Myers first in New York City and, later, in Cannes during his first foray at MIPCOM.

Between a glass of orange juice, a cup of coffee and an English muffin with marmalade, Myers explained that his two divisions (Starz Entertainment and, since last July, Starz Media) operate 16 TV channels, several production units, worldwide program sales and home video distribution divisions. The production division includes Overture Films, Film Roman, Manga Entertainment and Anchor Bay. The international distribution arm of Starz Media is based in Burbank, California, and is headed by evp Worldwide Distribution, Gene George.

While a few years back Starz's strategy was to try to reach consumers directly — without the middleman — via broadband, today the company is back with its traditional model as a content aggregator for various distribution platforms (cable, satellite, broadband and home video).

"Five years ago our main challenge was our linear channels, then we tried to go into retail with [IP-delivered] Vongo, but now we're back to being an aggregator, a wholesaler of content. The battlefield right now is with HD," said Myers. Similarly, up until a few years ago, the U.S. studios' mantra was also to eliminate the middleman. Today, according to Myers "it doesn't make sense for the studios to reach consumers directly."

In terms of innovation, Starz's sequence has been: first the development of linear channels, then on-demand channels and, most recently, HD channels — all with a subscription base.

The combination of a major content producer and content buyer make Starz one of the world's major suppliers to content distributors. "Our strength as an aggregator comes from the fact that we produce and are able to offer volume to our distributors. The strength of an aggregator is in the volume of content that it is able to offer to various platforms," explained Myers, "and we have long-term relationships and agreements with many production companies until 2013-14."

Then, where would Myers place IPTV? "That technology is still a mystery," he replied. "IPTV technology is not yet clear. I'm not aware of a study



Pictured above are Starz's Bill Myers and Gene George.

Right: VideoAge's Dom Serafini and Bill Myers sit down for breakfast

that offers a good picture. Possibly satellite services are investigating it, but I don't have any information."

How does he see the future? "For the next five years, the distribution business is going to be the same as today's. After that no one knows yet how this will change. The only thing we know is that it will not be a business model like the one we have today. But no one has thus far figured out what the next business model will be."

Starz's current business model is just a one-tier model. "Our business model is a per-sub fee from our distributors. We don't run ads." Its 16 channels are offered to distributors (cable and satellite and broadband operators), which in turn package (bundle) them for consumers who have to first pay a basic fee to get the cable or satellite service, and then pay for the Starz "premium" channels. The agreements with the distributors can be in revenue split or simply a fixed rate. Even though VoD is often equated with pay-per-view, for Starz it is just subscription VoD, meaning that customers pay a flat fee and can view content at will when it is most convenient. Conversely, linear TV services are called "appointment television."

Under the single-tier business model, profits for Starz are the difference between what it invests annually in content and what it receives from distribution partners. "We buy subscription rights, which includes on-demand," said Myers, "The way for us to grow is to [increase the number of subscribers]."

An overview of Starz's suite of 16 video subscription services shows, for example, that the on-demand channels average 450 titles per month, while HD on demand averages 100 titles per month. The IP-delivered "Starz Play" stream has 2,500 video selections and 1,000 movies.



On the content side, Starz has two forms of acquisition: 1) New release films under output deals (for 18 months). These include a second pay-TV window (for 12-18 months) after the five-year broadcast window. 2) Library content, nine-to-10 years after theatrical (with each movie licensed from single or multiple airings to many months or years).

The window Starz falls under is the pay-TV window, which is 10 months after the theatrical release. The window lasts for 18 months (and includes IPTV and downloads). The fee paid for new release movies is tied in with the theatrical box office success of the movies.

Navigating through various distribution rights could be a complex endeavor, but they can be simplified as: 1) Electronic subscription rights (Starz gets them exclusively). These can be:

- a) VoD
- b) Linear
- 2) Transactionally-based rights. These can be:
  - a) Retail business (purchase of DVDs)
  - b) Rental (electronic and DVDs, i.e., hard goods)
  - 3) Retail (hard goods or electronic, like VoD a la carte).

In addition, in order to clear up possible confusion with various windows, it is to be assumed that each movie is subject to these release windows:

- a) Theatrical
- b) DVD (four-to-five months after

*"For the next five years, the distribution business is going to be the same as today's. After that no one knows yet how this will change."*

theatrical)

- c) PPV (one month after DVD)
- d) Pay-TV window (three-to-four months after PPV)
- e) TV broadcast (five years after theatrical)
- f) Pay-TV second window (five years after broadcast)
- g) Library rights (10 years after theatrical).

In other news, the John Malone-controlled Liberty Media Corp. recently reported that because of timing and market conditions, it may not go ahead with its previously announced spin-off of Liberty Entertainment, which includes Starz Entertainment and a stake in DirecTV Group.

Meanwhile, revenue from Liberty Interactive, which includes TV's home shopping network QVC, rose two percent in the quarter due to last December's acquisition of bodybuilding.com. Revenue from Liberty Entertainment surged 21 percent following last February's acquisition of Liberty Sports Group. The planned spin-off of the Liberty Entertainment tracking stock into an asset-backed stock was viewed as a possible precursor to a merger, acquisition or sale of Liberty's 49 percent stake in DirecTV. Revenue from Liberty Capital, which includes the Atlanta Braves baseball franchise and interests in Time Warner and Sprint Nextel Corp., climbed 16 percent to \$221 million on a strong performance from Starz Media's 2008 film slate, including *Space Chimps*, *Righteous Kill* and *Traitor*. ●



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# Conferences & Events News

## Taxes Up on Hotels

Travel taxes are growing in the top 50 U.S. travel destinations, according to a new study by the National Business Travel Association (NBTA). According to the study, the cities that levy the largest total taxes on travelers are Chicago, which charges an average of \$42.44 per day; Nashville (\$39.55); Charlotte, NC (\$38.80) and Seattle (\$38.70). By contrast, the cities that levy the fewest taxes are Honolulu, which charges just \$21.45 per day; Portland, OR (\$22.83); Fort Lauderdale, FL (\$23.35); and Fort Myers, FL (\$23.35).

For the full report visit [www.nbta.org/Research/Surveys](http://www.nbta.org/Research/Surveys).

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# My Two Cents

**R**ecently, a sales executive at one of the world's major content distributors (but not a studio) was lamenting that, because of a particular country's censorship, his company was losing a valuable time slot on a TV broadcast network. Adding insult to injury, the distributor could not offer the client another program for that particular availability. This, in effect, compares to real estate.

Pleading with the broadcaster to move the objectionable TV show to a later, more "adult" hour did not prove successful. First because, for the broadcaster, it presented the hassle of re-arranging the station's programming schedule and, second, because the rights holder's license fee would have taken a dive. At that point it was better trying to have the show in that territory migrate to cable or satellite channels.

This experience made me realize how radically the international TV business has changed. Up until a few years ago, film and TV program producers and distributors set up shop at various trade shows or visited clients in their offices with suitcases full of videocassettes in the earlier days, DVDs later on and, today, PC screens, to sell rights to as many programs as possible, without ever worrying if they were going to even show up on TV.

Indeed, some TV operators bought programs not because they needed them, but simply to remove them from the competition. In some cases the TV outlets deemed it more worthwhile to lose money on the program license fee, than risking losing some of the audience (and thus, advertising revenue) due to counter-programming that the particular show offered to the competition.

Subsequently, when the syndication biz became a mature business in the U.S., distributors, who had to invest millions of dollars to clear (e.g., find TV time slots market-by-market) a show, always made sure to have on their shelves a ready-made program to replace the first one if it were to fail in the ratings. In those years the biggest challenge for U.S. syndicators was to find an opening on a TV station's schedule, and once the slot was finally conquered, no one would have wanted to lose.

What the U.S. TV business experienced in the late 1980s is no longer valid due to local stations' consolidation, nonetheless it is becoming a business model in other parts of the world. Unfortunately, only a handful of international distributors are actually capitalizing on it.

The writing was already on the wall a few years back, when, during the L.A. Screenings, the studios were complaining that they had to

compete among themselves and with the indies, for each and every half-hour avail on any day part of the world's TV outlets' schedules. The business model of studios' distribution was clearly changing from selling programs "by the pound" to securing time slots on any TV outlet.

Today, this strategic business model is increasingly, if slowly, being implemented by independent (i.e. non-studio) distributors, who are restructuring their sales staffs not according to program genre, but by territory. In the past, it was useful to have one team focus, on let's say, documentaries, another on drama (fiction) and yet another on children's programming and animation. Those sales executives were experts on their particular genre and knew their buyers well. The only problem was that, if the buyers liked a program but did not have slots open, nor could the buyers envision one opening in the near future, there was nothing that the seller could do, except be resigned.

On the other hand, when international sellers have control of their full catalogues and they know their various territories well, they can sell buyers specific programs that could improve the ratings of various time slots or fill sudden avails. American syndicators, who refined this sales tool to an art, would go to a

programmer with charts, statistics, ratings and focus group results to demonstrate how their shows would perform better than what was currently on a TV outlet's schedule.

This is the same route that international distributors will now have to take. There is no other way. Competition for time periods is getting tough, available time slots are getting scarcer (due to increasing local production) and rating winners are becoming fewer. But most importantly, as indicated above, the fact that international distributors now have full catalogues at their disposal, they can more easily close deals, especially when buyers indicate interest in a different genre than the one originally proposed. For example, if a distributor is making a sales pitch for, let's say, adult animation that could presumably do better than an existing show, but the buyer is, instead, showing interest in another time slot in which a drama series would do better, having a full catalogue available, the seller could certainly find exactly what the buyer is looking for.

Naturally, once the coveted time slot is conquered, the seller has found gold or struck oil! In that case the commanding order should be: Keep it, keep it at all costs.



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Dom Serafini



# NewCo Rai International

## Your New Global Italian Partner

### The Strategy

- **Offer.** A bouquet of new thematic channels focusing on the made-in-Italy brand: fashion, business, history, food, design, lifestyle, artistic and cultural heritage. **Raitalia**, formerly "**Rai International**," is the flagship channel, and aims to promote Italian language and culture, as well as to inform Italians living abroad. It offers a selection of Rai's best shows from domestic terrestrial and satellite networks 24 hours, seven days a week, including Italian soccer events and live news.
- **Target.** It addresses established Italian communities all over the world; including business and tourists travellers and non-Italians who love Italy.
- **Coverage.** The global reach of "RAI's international services" has increased thanks to the recent addition of Europe to its area of coverage.
- **New technological platforms.** To cable and satellite have been added: IPTV, Web-TV and Mobile TV.
- **Revenue model.** The two-tier business model comprises public financial support and commercial revenues.

### A Global Player On The World Stage

In the **USA**, **NewCo Rai international** distributes "Raitalia" as a pay-TV service from over 20 satellite and cable operators. In **Canada**, the TV channel is available from 10 satellite and cable operators. In **Latin America**, "Raitalia" is broadcast in 23 countries covering over 900 cities. In **Asia**, it reaches 51 nations. In **Africa**, **NewCo** "Raitalia" reaches all Sub-Saharan countries via satellite and cable. In **Europe**, "Raitalia" is now available via satellite and for cable and IPTV platforms. **NewCo Rai International** is also the worldwide distributor for **Satelradio**, Rai International's Radio Channel. In all, the services reach five continents, serving over 20 million TVHH: including 10 million in Latin America, 4 million in North America, 4 million in Europe and 1.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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